

ATHENIAN EMPIRE

478 TO 404 B.C.

FORMATION OF DELIAN LEAGUE TO FALL OF ATHENS

ERA SUMMARY – ATHENIAN EMPIRE

In the years following the [Persian War](#), Athens was rebuilt and the Greek navy expanded its domination of the Aegean Sea. Further naval victories over Persia resulted in the freeing of several Ionian Greek colonies from the Persian yoke and the increased prestige of Greece as a sea power. Athenian control of the Greek navy was made possible by the creation of the Delian league, a group of Greek colonies located in the Aegean Sea united for defense. Although this league was nominally a confederation, it was dominated by Athens, and eventually became the foundation of the Athenian Empire. Athens became very wealthy due both to its domination of trade in the region and also to the inflow of tribute that had to be paid to Athens in return for protection from Persia.

The most important statesmen in Athens in the years immediately after the Persian War, were [Cimon](#), son of Miltiades, and [Aristides](#). Both were involved in the organization of the Delian league and the rebuilding of Athens, including the construction of a fortified wall around the city to protect it from future invasions. Sparta opposed the building of walled cities, lest they fall into enemy hands, but the Athenians insisted and eventually a great wall was built from Athens to the sea, wide enough to drive two Chariots abreast. During the same period, great temples and state houses were built, funded mostly from the Delian league tributes, on a scale never before seen on the continent of Europe.

In 461 BC one of the greatest statesmen in Greek history came into power in Athens. [Pericles](#), more than any other person, determined the character of classical Athens. He was a patron of the arts and architecture, and he extended the democratic franchise to virtually all Athenian citizens. Greek theatre thrived under his leadership, and all four of the great Greek playwrights, [Aeschylus](#), [Sophocles](#), [Euripides](#), and [Aristophanes](#), lived during his thirty year reign. He made Athens the cultural center of the Mediterranean and paid pensions to philosophers, artists, sculptures, and poets, to encourage their contributions. The Parthenon



PHIDIAS AND THE STATUE OF ATHENA AT THE PARTHENON.

and many other great public buildings were built under his leadership, and the famous Greek Historians, [Herodotus](#), and [Thucydides](#) were both contemporaries.

Sparta, although shunning luxury and empire, looked upon Athens with distrust and jealousy. As Athens became more arrogant and contemptuous of the rights of its colonies, the dispute between the cities grew, and eventually Sparta and its allies declared war on Athens, and thus began the [Peloponnesian War](#). It was a futile and drawn out affair, lasting almost 30 years, with many horrendous atrocities, and its only long term effect was to critically weaken and depopulate all of mainland Greece. Athens for the most part, avoided meeting Sparta in battle on land and instead trusted to its fortified walls and control of the seas to provide for its people during the long years of siege. The first ten years of warfare resulted in almost no change in the state of affairs and eventually a ceasefire was arranged.

The Peace of Nicias lasted several years, until Athens, under the influence of [Alcibiades](#), undertook an ill-fated expedition to conquer the island of Sicily. This disastrous campaign was the turning point of the war. It destroyed Athens naval supremacy and greatly weakened it in its continuing struggle against Sparta. For ten more years the conflict raged on, until Sparta defeated the last remnant of the Athenian navy at the battle of ***Agos Potami***, and starved the walled city into submission.

Even during the Peloponnesian war, Athens produces some of its greatest geniuses. [Socrates](#), Aristophanes, Euripides and Thucydides all lived during this period, and their writings are among the most cherished in Western Civilization. Undeniably, however, the Peloponnesian war was a disaster from which Greece and Athens never fully recovered. Athens eventually regained its reputation as a center of culture and education, but was never again dominant over the other unruly city states.

CHARACTERS – ATHENIAN EMPIRE

ARTS AND LITERATURE

- Aeschylus** 525–456 BC First of the three great Greek Tragedians. Wrote plays including the tragedies of *Oedipus* and *Antigone*.
- Sophocles** 496–406 BC Wrote Greek Tragedies, including the tragedies of Agamemnon, Electra, and Orestes.
- Euripides** 480–406 BC Third of the great Greek Tragedians. Wrote *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Orestes*, *Electra* and many others.
- Aristophanes** 448–388 BC Greatest of Greek Comedian playwrights. Wrote *Frogs*, *Clouds*, *Peace*, *Birds*, and many others.
- Pindar** 518–438 BC Most famous of Greek Lyric Poets.
- Phidias** 500–432 BC Built statues of Athena in the Parthenon and Jupiter at Olympia. Friend of Pericles.
- Herodotus** 484–425 BC Wrote *Histories* of the Persian War and empires of the east.
- Thucydides** 460–400 BC Historian of Peloponnesian War. An Athenian general sent into exile after he failed a mission.

SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

- Anaxagoras** 500–428 BC First Great Philosopher of Athens, thought to be a teacher of Socrates.
- Socrates** 469–399 BC First moral philosopher, immortalized by Plato.
- Hippocrates** 460–377 BC Father of modern medicine. Set up medical school to train doctors by scientific methods.

STATESMEN

- Pericles** 499–429 BC Athenian statesman during Golden Age of Athens. Made Athens cultural center of Greece.
- Aspasia** ~ 450 BC Foreign born courtesan and wife of Pericles. Highly educated for a woman of her age.
- Archidamus** 476–427 BC Spartan King during the early years of Peloponnesian War. Sought peace with Athens, but was forced into the war.
- Artaxerxes I** d. 424 BC King of Persia during early part of Peloponnesian War, allied with Sparta

MILITARY

- Cimon** d. 449 BC Athenian statesman and general. Fought Persians in Ionia after the war. Friend of Sparta.
- Cleon** d. 422 BC War mongering politician, opposed Sparta's peace proposals.
- Brasidas** d. 422 BC Eloquent Spartan general, turned tide of Peloponnesian War in Sparta's favor. Died at Amphipolis.
- Lysander** d. 395 BC Spartan naval Commander who defeated Athens in Peloponnesian War.
- Gylippus** ~ 413 BC Lead the resistance in Syracuse that defeated Athenian forces during Peloponnesian War.
- Alcibiades** 450–404 BC Controversial statesman and general of Athens, who betrayed the city, then returned as hero.
- Nicias** d. 413 BC After death of Pericles, emerged as leader of peace party. Led disastrous Sicilian Expedition.
- Demosthenes** d. 413 BC Important Athenian general in the Peloponnesian War. Perished at Syracuse.
- Lamachus** d. 415 BC Admiral who with Nicias and Alcibiades led the Sicilian Expedition. Died in early combat.

TIMELINE – ATHENIAN EMPIRE

- 477 The Delian League of sea-faring Greek city-states is organized under the leadership of Athens.
- 475 [Cimon](#) conquers the pirates of Scyros and brings the bones Theseus back to Athens.
- 472 [Themistocles](#), the hero of Salamis, is exiled from Athens.
- 467 Tragic playwright [Aeschylus](#) presents "Seven Against Thebes".
- 466 Delian Navy, under [Cimon](#), destroys the Persian fleet at Eurymedon River
- 462 A widespread helot Rebellion, following a severe earthquake in Sparta, is put down.
- 456 The "long walls" from Athens to the port at Piraeus are completed.
- 453 **Treasure of the Delian League is moved to Athens.**
- 447 Construction begins on the Parthenon.
- 445-431 [Pericles](#) leads Athens during the "Golden Age" of the Athenian Empire.
- 445 "Peace of Pericles" leads to 14 years of peace between Spartan allies and Athens.
- 430 [Phidias](#) begins work on the Statue of Zeus at Olympia.
- 420 [Herodotus](#) completes work on "*The Histories*". .
- 431-404 **[Peloponnesian War](#), fought between Athenian Empire and cities allied with Sparta.**
- 430 The plague at Athens kills thousands of besieged citizens, including Pericles.
- 428 A Revolt at Mytilene is crushed when the city attempts to rebel from the Athenian league.
- 427 *Destruction of Plataea* by Sparta.
- 425 [Cleon](#) leads Athens to victory over Sparta at the *Battle of Sphacteria*.
- 422 Warhawks [Brasidas](#) of Sparta and [Cleon](#) of Athens are killed at the *Battle of Amphipolis*
- 421 "Peace of Nicias" provides 6 year break in hostilities
- 415 ***Sicilian Expedition* led by [Nicias](#) and [Alcibiades](#) ends in disaster for Athens.**
- 406 Athenian generals are executed for dereliction of duty after their ***Victory at Arginusae***.
- 405 Spartan hero [Lysander](#) destroys the Athenian fleet at the *Battle of Aegos Potami*.
- 404 **Athens surrenders after city is besieged and port is blockaded by a Spartan fleet.**
- 406 Death of [Euripides](#) great tragic playwright of the classical period.

RECOMMENDED READING – ATHENIAN EMPIRE

CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS *

Haaren - <u>Famous Men of Greece</u>	<u>Cimon</u> to <u>Socrates</u> (5)
Guerber - <u>The Story of the Greeks</u>	<u>Cimon Improves Athens</u> to <u>Death of Alcibiades</u> (12)
Macgregor - <u>The Story of Greece</u>	<u>Delian League</u> to <u>Walls of Athens Destroyed</u> (26)

SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Cowles - <u>Our Little Athenian Cousin</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Tappan - <u>Story of the Greek People</u>	<u>After the Persian War</u> to <u>Fall of Athens</u> (5)
Harding - <u>Greek Gods and Heroes</u>	<u>Aristides the Just</u> to <u>Socrates, the Philosopher</u> (4)
Morris - <u>Historical Tales - Greek</u>	<u>Four Famous Men of Athens</u> to <u>Socrates and Alcibiades</u> (7)
Church - <u>Greek Life and Story</u>	<u>In the Theatre at Athens</u> to <u>The Lion's Cub</u> (11)
Church - <u>Stories from Greek Comedians</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Church - <u>Stories from Greek Tragedians</u>	<i>entire book</i>

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Church - <u>Three Greek Children</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Gould - <u>Children's Plutarch - Greeks</u>	<u>The Admiral of the Fleet</u> to <u>Three Powers</u> (5)
Tappan - <u>Old World Hero Stories</u>	<u>Pericles and His Age</u> to <u>Socrates and Plato</u> (2)
Shaw - <u>Stories of the Ancient Greeks</u>	<u>Glorious Days</u> to <u>A Wasted Life</u> (3)
Kaufman - <u>Young Folks Plutarch</u>	<u>Cimon</u> to <u>Lysander</u> (5)
Church - <u>Sicilian Expedition</u>	<i>entire book</i>

* *Level I and II Study Questions are based on **Core** Reading Assignments.*